



SCOTT FITZPATRICK

MISSOURI STATE AUDITOR

Investigative Summary

Summary of Significant Complaint(s) reported: The State Auditor's Office received a complaint alleging the former and current Pulaski County Public Administrators misappropriated ward assets in an investment account and sold a ward's home to a relative. The complainants were also concerned with the level of spending by the former and current Public Administrators on legal fees and expenses.

Background: The Public Administrator serves as the court appointed personal representative for decedent estates and as guardian and/or conservator for individuals who are unable to care for themselves or their property when there is no one else to serve in that capacity. The Public Administrator was responsible for the financial activity of approximately 89 wards with assets totaling approximately \$1,462,000 as of December 31, 2024. The Public Administrator is required to file annual settlements with the Circuit Court, Probate Division, for each appointed ward or estate reflecting the financial activity for the year.

Complaint Review: A review of 9 ward files, including those specifically referred by the complainants, found no issues. We reviewed supporting documentation for the decisions made related to ward expenses as well as relevant court documents. All decisions appear to be supported, approved, and appropriately reported to the courts responsible for overseeing the activities of the Public Administrator. There is no documentation to support the specific investment account in question ever existed. We reviewed the house sale the complainants noted was a concern. The complainants indicated a ward's property was sold to the former Public Administrator's father. A review of relevant information indicated the house was sold to individuals that do not appear to be related to either Public Administrator. One of the complainants is involved in ongoing litigation with the Public Administrator and it appears appropriate for those issues to be resolved by the courts. We also reviewed the legal expenses of the Public Administrator and did not note anything unusual. It appears a significant portion of the Public Administrator's legal expenses are related to the complainant's legal actions.

Conclusion:

In our review of the complaints, we found no indications of fraud or corruption. It appears the Public Administrator has procedures in place to appropriately support actions taken on behalf of a ward. In addition, one of the complainants is involved in ongoing litigation with the Public Administrator and it appears appropriate for the courts to resolve those issues as they are the entity responsible for overseeing the Office of the Public Administrator. We will issue a closure letter indicating no further investigation will be pursued.